

Pathway to “Healthy at Church”

RESTART PLAN



Much has been made throughout this time of quarantine and social distancing about being “Healthy at Home” and now “Healthy at Work.” We want to propose a need for every church to develop a pathway to being “Healthy at Church.” This document is an attempt to pull together important links, templates, and guides that LRBA church leaders can use as you develop your plans.

The following pages are a compilation of material gathered from several sources, edited where appropriate and adapted to fit Kentucky and our region to the best of our current understanding. These suggested pathways recognize that we are dealing with a moving target. We also recognize that we are working with multiple layers of governmental recommendations. There are White House, CDC, Kentucky, as well as, Louisville and County jurisdictions to consider. We cannot factor everything into these recommendations, because none of these entities have fully developed or announced their full opening guidelines. Please recognize that many of these plans use terms like gauging, phases, and steps in differing ways.

Here are links to key Guideline webpages:

White House: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>

Centers For Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

Commonwealth of KY: <https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-work>

Louisville’s Build Back, Better Together: <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/build-back-better-together/next>

It has been announced that Houses of Worship can begin in-person meetings again as of May 20th (titled Phase 1 part 2 of the KY plan). This will mark the beginning of Phase 2(Federal Plan) in the chart below. [I told you it was confusing!]

You may want to Poll your congregation (here’s a link to one from [LifeWay](#)) on their expectations.

The guidelines suggest that faith communities consider limiting gatherings to those that can be held virtually or streamed online, for the Federal phase one.

For all three phases, the CDC recommends that faith communities consider temporarily limiting the sharing of hymn books and other worship materials and consider using a stationary collection box or mail or electronic payment instead of the traditional shared collection trays or baskets; and avoid or consider suspending choir or musical ensembles during religious services.

The CDC also recommends that when holding in-person services, institutions consider holding them in a large, well-ventilated areas or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, and space out seating for attendees who do not live in the same household to at least six feet apart when possible

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Federally defined Phases >>>	PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE	PHASE FOUR “NORMAL”
INDIVIDUAL/GROUP INTERACTIONS				
SOCIAL DISTANCING	Strict	Moderate	Limited	Normal
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS (VP)*	Stay Home	Stay Home	Moderate Distancing	Discretionary
MAX GROUPS/CROWDS	10	50 – 100 As Instructed**	No Size Limit/Use Discretion	No Size Limit
(YOUR CHURCH) RESPONSES				
OFFICE STAFF	Limited Hours / Altered hours	Alternating schedules	Normal Operation	Normal Operation
WORSHIP SERVICES	Online Only/Drive In	Adjusted Schedules/Online	Regular Schedule/Online	Regular Schedule/Online
SS/Small Groups/Life Groups/Community Groups/ Family Groups	Online Only	Online/Groups may meet within MAX GROUPS/CROWDS**	Regular Schedule/Online	Regular Schedule
PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN	Online Only	Online Only	Open w/ VP Distancing	Open
STUDENTS (7-12)	Online Only	Some Group Activities with Distancing	Regular Schedule	Regular Schedule
MID-WEEK SERVICES	No	No	Adjusted Schedule	Regular Schedule
CHOIR	No	No	No	Yes
PRAISE BAND/WORSHIP TEAM	Six People Max (No VP) Six-Feet Apart	Ten People Max (No VP) Six-Feet Apart	Regular with Expanded Worship Team (no VP)	Regular Activity
BATHROOM USAGE	None/highly limited	Highly limited/Limited	Limited	Normal
COMMITTEES, MINISTRY TEAMS, & DEACONS MEETINGS	Online Only	Online Only	Live Plus Online	Live Plus Online
MINISTRY EVENTS			Some Events (Likely Modified)	As Scheduled
VBS	Postponed/Online/Backyard Bible Clubs	Online/Backyard Bible Clubs/VBS (50-100)	Proceed with VP Workers Distancing	As Scheduled
CAMPS	Canceled	Canceled/Shift to Local Option		As Newly Scheduled
MISSION TRIPS	Postponed/Local Events per guidelines provided (>10)	Postponed/Local Events per guidelines provided (MAX GROUPS/CROWDS)**	Proceed with No VP	As Scheduled
DIVERSE OPINIONS	Show Grace	Show Grace	Show Grace	Show Grace

***VULNERABLE POPULATIONS [VP]** (from the White House Coronavirus Task Force)

[Modified from FBC, Lone Oak and NKBA]

- Elderly individuals, classified by 65 years or older
- Individuals with serious underlying health conditions. Such underlying conditions include, but are not limited to, chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, hypertension, severe heart conditions, weakened immunity, severe obesity, diabetes, liver disease, and chronic kidney disease that requires dialysis.

**To be determined by state and local guidelines.

This template has been completed with suggested actions. Feel free to use & modify it as a tool to make your own guide for healthy steps.

By JOE CARTER, The Gospel Coalition

The Story: *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has compiled new “Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith” that outlines precautions churches may need to take when states lift their coronavirus restrictions.*

The Background: *The CDC’s document—which is not legally binding and has not been officially released yet—notes that the “guidance is not intended to infringe on First Amendment rights as provided in the US Constitution.” Neither the CDC nor any other federal government agency can prescribe standards for interactions of faith communities that are “more stringent than the mitigation strategies asked of similarly situated entities or activities in accordance with the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act (RFRA).”*

The CDC offers the following suggestions for consideration “to the extent consistent with each community’s faith tradition”:

Hygienic and cleaning practices

- Encourage use of flexible or virtual options whenever possible for all non-worship activities (e.g., counseling, volunteer meetings).
- Follow specific CDC guidance for childcare or educational programming for children and youth.
- Encourage use of a cloth face covering at all gatherings and when in the building by everyone except children aged less than 2 years old. (Not using a cloth face covering may also be appropriate at times for some individuals who have trouble breathing or need assistance to remove their mask.)
- Have adequate hygiene supplies, such as soap, tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand sanitizer (with at least 60 percent alcohol).
- Consider posting signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and promote everyday protective measures.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between use. Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep them away from children.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, and so on. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other diseases associated with water.

Promoting social distancing

- Limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and in accordance with RFRA.
- Consider video streaming or drive-in options for services.
- If appropriate and possible, add additional services to weekly schedules to maintain social distancing at each service, ensuring that clergy, staff, and volunteers at the services ensure social distancing to lessen their risk.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow.

- Space out seating for attendees who do not live in the same household to at least six feet apart when possible; consider limiting seating to alternate rows.
- Consider whether other gatherings may need to have attendance limited or be held virtually if social distancing is difficult, such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups, and any other programming.
- Avoid or consider suspending use of a choir or musical ensemble during religious services or other programming, if appropriate within the faith tradition. Consider having a soloist or strictly limiting the number of choir members and keep at least six feet between individuals.
- Consider having clergy hold virtual visits (by phone or online) instead of in homes or at the hospital except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end of life.
- Consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encourage congregants to bring their own, if possible, photocopying, or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Consider mitigating the risk of transmitting COVID-19 posed by close physical contact among members of the faith community during religious rituals as well as mediated contact through frequently touched objects, consistent with the community's faith traditions and in consultation with local health officials as needed.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee whenever possible, instead of a buffet or family-style meal.
- Avoid food offerings when it is being shared from common dishes.
- Train all clergy and staff in the above safety actions. Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained.

Monitoring and preparing

- Encourage staff or congregants who are sick to stay at home. Plan for when a staff member or congregant becomes sick.
- Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms during hours of operation and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes sick at the facility to their home or a health-care facility.
- Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws in accordance with religious practices.
- Inform those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until it after cleaning and disinfection; wait 24 hours to clean and disinfect to reduce risk to individuals cleaning. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.
- Advise sick staff and congregants not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Maintain healthy operations

- Implement flexible sick leave and related flexible policies and practices for staff (e.g., allow work from home, if feasible).
- Monitor absenteeism and create a roster of trained back-up staff. Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to close, then properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present.
- Communicate clearly with staff and congregants about actions being taken to protect their health.

What It Means: Your reaction to this guidance will depend on what you were expecting from the federal government. Some pastors and elders may have thought the lifting of restrictions would mean a return to normal procedures and practices. If so, the CDC's vision of sermons being delivered to half-empty pews full of people wearing face masks may come as a shock.

But most church leaders are likely expecting that the "new normal" will be look strange. For those planners, this latest guidance by the CDC (which mostly restates commonsensical coronavirus practices) may seem underwhelming. What the guidance underscores it that the civil authorities will not be handing down a plan that can be easily adopted and implemented by our churches.

Instead, we must rely on our people—both those in our congregation and also members of the larger body of Christ—to plan for how to protect our churches. Fortunately, we are up to the task. As Paul says in Ephesians, when Jesus ascended on high, he "gave gifts to his people" (4:8). We can trust that the Lord has gifted his people with the wisdom and skills necessary to prepare for what comes next.

Doing so, however, may require that we set aside our need to maintain control and our aversion to input from outsiders. We may need to make policy decision based on the wisdom of fellow believers who we may disagree with on substantive matters, such as baptism or ecclesiology. Can we come together for the good of God's people? If we can, we may find that church in the time of COVID-19 may be a time of both social distancing and also gospel-centered unity.

Adapted from the GA Baptist Convention.

BE INFORMED

Know the risk factors for the virus. This can help you make decisions on staffing, volunteers, and whether you will return sooner or later. For example, those with preexisting conditions and those over 65 years old are at a higher risk of experiencing worse symptoms and potentially death than others if they contract the virus.

Poll your congregation (here's a link through [LifeWay](#)) on their expectations. Be in constant communication. Also know that there is no rush to return to the building. You can continue doing online services or drive-in church if your congregation is still experiencing anxiety and fear.

PREPARE YOUR CHURCH FACILITY

- Deep clean your entire church. Where will germs be transferred? Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, and microphones. (communicate to members what steps you have taken)
- Use chemicals and disinfectants as directed and allow for the proper dry times. Here is a [list of approved disinfectants for COVID-19](#).
- Pay attention to the preschool and children's areas. Consider removing everything nonessential from the rooms to limit surfaces for potential contamination and moving forward be sure to do a thorough cleaning in between uses.
- Temporarily remove Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, etc., from the backs of chairs/pews.
- Post signs about not shaking hands and doing non-contact greetings. You can promote the hashtag [#itsoktosmileandwave](#).
- Make proper changes to your sanctuary and/or classrooms to ensure social distancing. Utilize tape, remove chairs, mark off pews, use cones, etc. to indicate the proper distance for separation needed.
- Tell your congregation through fliers on the doors, email, and social media about how you've prepared the church for their arrival. Be sure to use the words "clean, safe, and mindful of health needs and issues in preparation for a non-touch experience" or something similar. Also say that *if they are sick*, then they should not be present and can join online instead.

SERVICE TIMES AND LOCATION

- Keep an online meeting option for those who are afraid or unable to attend your service in person. Many churches have seen a spike in engagement since their online presence has increased. Capitalize on it!
- You can offer multiple services to encourage a greater chance of social distancing. One way to ensure your services are evenly spread is to have people sign up for a service. You can use Facebook events and have people mark which event they'll attend.
- Remember that if you have multiple services, you will need to clean between each service. You can shorten the service time to help with the timing of cleaning thoroughly. Some churches are moving to having multiple services during the week to allow for cleaning in between service times.
- Another option is to host multiple services in different portions of your building. (eg. one service in sanctuary, one in fellowship hall)
- Determine how many volunteers or staff you have available to assist. These plans cannot be completed without sufficient people to do each task. Limit volunteers to those who do not have preexisting conditions and those who are under 65 years old.

WORSHIP SERVICES

- Celebrate the return! Hopefully you have some time to plan a Comeback Service. Encourage praise, provide times of testimony, and a sermon that spurs people to embrace life changes God has revealed to them during the quarantine.
- If your people are from the same household, they can sit together. Space out other individuals and groups. See the preparation section.
- Remember to avoid handing out bulletins, and instead project announcements on screens. Also do not allow people to come by and pick up bulletins out of stacks. If you must use bulletins, consider placing bulletins on the pews or chairs, but ask the people to take bulletins home with them.
- You could also convert bulletins to a digital format maybe accessed by scanning a [QR code](#).
- Change the way you offer communion. Avoid passing a plate or bowl. LifeWay.com offers combined elements of communion that can be picked up as people enter – but make sure that people are not touching other items when picking up their own.
- Avoid passing microphones on the stage.
- Continue offering online giving options. Have stations in the church where people can drop offerings instead of passing a plate. Make sure whoever processes these envelopes uses proper sanitary procedures.
- Come up with a fun way to greet others in a no-contact way.
- Clean the pulpit after every use.
- Consider dismissing in a specific and orderly way to ensure there is social distancing.

AMENITIES: COFFEE, BULLETINS, AND HAND SANITIZER

- Restrooms: You must decide whether you will allow bathroom usage at this time. If you don't think you can allow it, then it may not be time to return to the building, or you should at least clearly communicate your intentions before people return to your building.
- Do not hand out bulletins. Do not allow people to come by and pick them up out of stacks. (see above)
- Withhold coffee stations, donuts, or groups meals at this time. You can stay attuned to the guidelines to know when it is best to reintroduce these services.
- If you choose to keep your restrooms open (many recommend keeping them closed), be sure to post signs about washing hands in bathrooms with appropriate guidelines to doing so.
- Display hand sanitizer throughout the church. It may be difficult to obtain at this point, so consider if you should meet in person without this element.
- Supply masks for those without one to increase comfort levels. Again, these may be difficult to obtain, but you could have people make reusable, washable masks as a service to the church.

STAFFING: ESP. GREETERS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Provide security and enlist ushers to be both inside and outside greeters. Instruct them on how to greet post-quarantine: NO hand shaking or hugs. Utilize other non-contact methods.
- Ensure doors are propped open or have the greeters hold them open.
- Greeters and Volunteers should be able to answer questions on procedures and policies upon the return to the building. Train them beforehand if possible.

- If your bathrooms are open, have greeters monitor the bathrooms to ensure hands are washed and social distancing is followed.
- Consider a temperature check on all staff and volunteers.

TECH TEAMS

- Clean microphones, headphones, computers, laptops, etc. after every use. Keep a record of when each item was cleaned. DO NOT use water. Rubbing alcohol or alcohol-based cleaners are best.
- Rotate your tech team if possible. Again, encourage those who feel sick or run down to not come into the service.
- Keep using the online services. Facebook may be more accessible as many people have accounts but consider other options like YouTube for those who'd like to watch on their smart TVs.
- Add in text on screens through projectors if you haven't already. This may be a good opportunity to do so. Secure a [CCLI license](#) for copyright compliance if you do.
- If you don't have media support for announcements or singing, then print texts and place them in the pews/chairs. Encourage people to take the bulletins/music sheets home with them and not leave them in the pews.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND SMALL GROUPS

- The Governor's office is recommending that churches only provide worship services at this time. No Sunday School or small groups should meet in-person currently. Continue encouraging small groups to meet online.
- Until groups meet in-person again, make sure you have provided an outline for your teachers and leaders to continue engagement for your groups. This is still an excellent time to build classes and community.
---When small groups are approved---
- Consider dividing your groups to maintain the social distancing standards. You can also allow small groups to use the church on different days/nights if you choose to meet in person.
- When you do begin meeting in-person again, please know you should clean thoroughly the doorknobs, water fountains, and other high traffic areas in between uses.
- Have a plan for your leaders and teachers. Consider the continuation of online tools developed during the quarantine period. Talk openly about the positive practices for connecting during the time of separation.

PRESCHOOL AND CHILDREN

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children 2 years of age and under do not wear masks or face coverings. Please keep this in mind as you make decisions.
- Here is a good rule of thumb: If you wear a mask, it's too soon to have your preschool and children areas open. Masks may be frightening to children.
- Seriously consider not opening nursery or preschool on the initial Sundays after return. Some churches are choosing to reopen the preschool and children areas when schools are open.
- Pre-register children to limit how many are in any room at a time. Some churches are starting with a five-child limit in each room.

- Limit leaders in the preschool and children's areas to those who do not have pre-existing conditions. Also limit leaders to those under 65 years old.
- Have extra volunteers to help in the preschool ministry where some children may suffer from separation anxiety after only being with parents for a long time.
- Have only one person handle child check in stations and do not pass any check-in devices. Create no-touch check-in if possible.
- Do not let parents past an appointed check-in area.
- Have a check list of what's been cleaned and when in each room.
- Develop a list of procedures for your volunteers. Train them on this list through Zoom prior to the first gathering time.

CHOIRS, ORCHESTRAS, PRAISE TEAMS, BANDS, ETC.

- Praise Teams: Do not use the full team. Consider rotations. Assign microphones and use the same one every time.
- Choir: Consider suspending choir practices as forceful breathing and exhaling can expel the virus further if someone is infected. However, you could consider using smaller numbers as you reintroduce choir to the service. Also space members out appropriately (consider using a diamond pattern with six feet of spacing between members).
- Temporarily suspend using hymnals. Encourage your members to print/use their own music sheets or place the music in assigned seating prior to the service.
- Orchestras: Keep parts to a minimum and ensure the orchestras are spaced appropriately. Encourage brass players to bring their own towel to catch spit so it doesn't land on the carpet.
- Consider not using choir robes as space for robe changing may be limited. Just as healthcare workers change or wash their coats after each use, so should the robes be dry cleaned and stored in the bags from the cleaners.
- Wipe down music stands after each use.
- Dismiss the choir in a fashion to allow distancing.

KY Guidelines for your reference:

Healthy at Work

PHASE 1 REOPENING

May 11

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Vehicle or Vessel Dealerships
- Professional Services (50%)
- Horse Racing (No Fans)
- Dog Grooming / Boarding

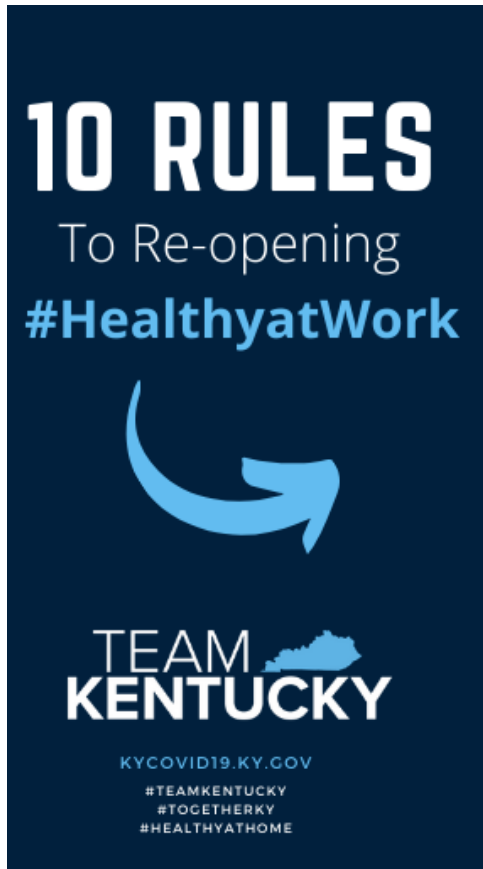
May 20

- Retail
- Houses of Worship

May 25

- 10 Person individual Social Gatherings
- Barbers, salons, cosmetology businesses, and similar services

Before any of the businesses above may reopen, each business must meet the following minimum requirements in addition to industry-specific guidance that will be released in coming days and weeks.



- ✓ Continue telework where possible
- ✓ Phased return to work
- ✓ Onsite temperature/health checks
- ✓ Universal masks and any other necessary PPE
- ✓ Close common areas (waiting rooms, cafeterias, break rooms, etc.)
- ✓ Enforce social distancing
- ✓ Limit face-to-face meetings
- ✓ Sanitizer/hand wash stations
- ✓ Special accommodations
- ✓ Testing plan

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If any business in a sector being reopened cannot comply with the minimum requirements set out above, they must wait to reopen until they are able to do so or until some or all of these restrictions are lifted.

For those businesses that have been deemed life-sustaining and remained operating, they will be expected to meet the minimum requirements no later than May 11, 2020.

People should be prepared for state and local public health orders to be extended, amended, or changed as needed to protect public health. This means we may move between the different Phases during this pandemic.

If you have questions please review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#). If you have additional questions please email them to HealthyAtWork@ky.gov